HALF AN HOUR

AFTER

SUPPER:

AN INTERLUDE,

IN ONE ACT,

As performed at the

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT,

Opposite Burlington House, Piccadilly.

MDCCLXXXIX.

[Price One Shilling.]

With respect and diffidence,

This trifle is dedicated to

GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

Whose attention and politeness, where he discerns the least spark of genius, though sufficiently known, can never be enough acknowledged by those who experience his candour and protection.—And whilst a generous and decent pride shall preserve my pen from descending to mean adulation, yet, may this small tribute add one more pledge of honour to a character revered and valued by all; more especially the gentle and the fearful, led on by his delicate and kind encouragements: of which no one can be more highly sensible than she, who, with respect and esteem, now subscribes herself,

His most grateful,
most obliged,
and most obedient
humble servant,

THE AUTHORESS.

London,
June, 1789.

The favourable reception with which this little ſketch has been honoured by a generous publick, demands the moſt grateful acknowledgements of its authoreſs; who now commits it to the preſs, in the hope it may not offend, or loſe its value, in the cloſets of her fair countrywomen — whoſe literary purſuits, though ſhe ever regrets to ſee them terminate in FEMALE PEDANTRY, would, in her opinion, be ſtill more to their honour, were they not too frequently engaged in the dangerous detail of amorous adventures, or, at beſt, tending to idle and frivolous amuſement.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Mr. Sturdy,	—	Mr. KEMBLE.
Mr. Bentley,	—	Mr. WILLIAMSON.
Captain Berry,	—	Mr. ILIFF.
Frank,	—	Mr. JOHNSON.

WOMEN.

Mrs. Sturdy,	—	Mrs. EDWIN.
Miſs Tabitha,	—	Mrs. BARRESFORD.
Miſs Elizabeth,	daughters to	Miſs HEARD.
Miſs Sukey,	Mr. Sturdy,	Mrs. TAYLOR.
Nanny,	—	Miſs PRIDEAUX.

Half an Hour after Supper, &c.

SCENE opens and discovers the family as sitting after supper, the table-cloth not removed—on the side-board the night candlesticks—Mrs. Sturdy at the upper end of the table, facing the audience—Miss Tabitha next her, as reading a novel, the book open in her hand, leaning on her elbows, one candle near her—Mr. Sturdy asleep, dressed in a green velvet cap, and his slippers, next to Miss Tabitha—Miss Elizabeth next her mother on the other side, (weeping,) and Miss Sukey next her sister.

Miss *Tabitha* (reading).

——"LAdy Harriet was ready to sink —supported her-"self by the back of a chair—my Lord Harry "upon his knees, assuring her"—

Mrs. Sturdy. Eliza, my dear! lard, the sweet girl! she's so infected!

Eliza. Indeed, mamma, Lady Harriet's distress has so overcome me—but pray go on, madam.

Tabitha (proceeds, reading). "Lord Harry on his knees, "assuring her"—

Sturdy

Sturdy (waking). Come, come, Tab, lay by your book, and let us off to bed —you've read me to ſleep already (rubbing his eyes).

Mrs. Sturdy. Eliza, my dear, your father ſpeaks.

Mr. Sturdy. Pſhaw !—Eliza, truly !—Yes, every girl whoſe name is Bet muſt be called Eliza now-a-days; and Sukey, here, what the devil have you contrived to make of her name !

Mrs. Sturdy. Ah ! it was all along off you as how ſhe was chriſten'd ſo ineleguntly.

Mr. Sturdy. Umph !—well then, I'll try and mend it —here, Miſs Suzina, pleaſe to give me my candle—ay, ay, Tab, put up your book, put up your book, for you ſee you have overcome us all (yawning).

Miſs Tabitha. Indeed I cannot poſſibly ſhut the book at ſuch an intereſting criſis, brother (taking her ſnuff, and preparing again to read).

Mr. Sturdy. It's enough to provoke a ſaint to ſee how theſe curſed novels interrupt the whole order of one's houſe ! I can neither go to dinner, ſupper, or to bed, if you happen to be in a d——d "intereſting criſis," as you call it.—At your time of life, ſiſter Tabitha, you ought to have done with ſuch things.

Miſs Tabitha (nettled). "My time of life, ſir !" I - - - - I - - - -

Mr. Sturdy. Yes, ſiſter—I was in hopes, when I invited you into my family, you would have ſet my girls here a good example, have taught 'em to have been good houſe-wives, and fitted them to have made ſome honeſt, reſpectable men happy, as virtuous, diſcreet wives—not made their heads lumber garrets to a circulating library.

Mrs. Sturdy. I am ſure as how ſiſtur Tabitha has improved us all monſtrouſly ſince ſhe com'd amongſt us, except yourſelf, indeed; and taught my galls taſte—and ſentiment and ſenſibilities !

Mr. Sturdy. "Senſibility !" for what ?—to blubber and roar over diſtreſſes that never exiſted, and ſteel your hearts againſt that which ſurrounds us. Could I collect more than a crown amongſt ye all the other day, for poor Bob Martin, his diſtreſſed wife, and ſeven children, all ill at once,

once, and not a ſhilling to buy them neceſſaries?—becauſe, truly, their diſtreſs wasn't elegant; and when I remonſtrated at your unfeelingneſs, I was put off with "Lord, ſir! one can't relieve every body!"

Miſs Tabitha (throwing the book down upon the table, riſing, and coming forward). Brother, by Heavens! you are enough to provoke the patience of Job with your abſurdities.

Mr. Sturdy (mighty compoſed). Amongſt all his other plagues, I wonder whether Job's wife and daughters read novels! and ſubſcrib'd to a circulating library!

Miſs Tab. Abominable!

Mrs. Sturdy. Never mind him, ſiſtur, for you knows as how this is always my huſbant's giminy-gominy way!

Mr. Sturdy (very calmly). That's right, wife—ſetting me out to the girls as a ridiculous old fellow, for wiſhing to conduct my family by the rules of common ſenſe—they will fly from my authority and protection into the arms of a couple of ſcoundrels, who will take them for the ſake of their fortunes; and ſiſter Tab will enliſt under the banners of ſome Iriſh enſign.

Miſs Tabitha (ironically). To be ſure, ſir, it would be a pity to diſappoint ſuch expectations——but whilſt you will render yourſelf obnoxious to every idea of delicate ſuſceptibility, and be the tyrant——

Mr. Sturdy. No, madam;—if I cannot guide my family by affection, I diſclaim controuling it by force: ſo good night—good night—Come, Suzina, give me the candle! (taking his candle) and if you all chuſe to ſit up reading about Lady Harriet and Lord Harry, and the Ducheſs of Devildum, till breakfaſt time to-morrow morning, ſo be it;—only I beg leave not to be an auditor, that's all—ſo good night, good night. [Exit.

Mrs. Sturdy. Lord, how wulgar! he has neither feelun, taſte or gentility! with his ſtrange conjobbling notions of things!

Miſs Tabitha. I declare the man has ſo deranged my every idea!——

Mrs. Sturdy. It is always his ridiculus way, ſiſtur—but, come, let us retire to my dreſſing room, dears (to

 her

her daughters), and my ſiſtur will finiſh the wollum; for I am monſtrouſly puzzled to know what's to be done with Lady Harriet!

Miſs Eliza. If you would excuſe me, mamma, I am ſo unwell——what with my father, and the immenſe anxiety raiſed for Lady Harriet's delicate and embarraſſed ſituation——

Miſs Sukey. I had better attend my ſiſter, ma'am, to her room; it may be too much for her preſent agitated ſpirits to hear the reſt of the ſtory till to-morrow.

Miſs Tabitha. Certainly, my dear; oh! how amiable is her ſenſibility!—yes—yes—let Mr. Sturdy talk about "common ſenſe," and dull "matters of fact;" give me the events of life totally unexpected! totally adapted to genius and enthuſiaſm!—I will attend you, therefore, ſiſter, for I cannot ſleep till I know how Lady Harriet eſcapes the ſituation and entanglements we left her in!

Mrs. Sturdy. Oh no! nor I neither; ſo recower your ſpiruts, my ſweet Eliza.

[Exeunt Mrs. Sturdy and Miſs Tabitha.

Miſs Sukey (looking after them). Oh yes, ma'am!—we've a receipt for that preſently.

Miſs Eliza. So far from it, ſiſter, that I am terrified at the idea of this elopement of ours to night, and I am almoſt determined upon retracting my promiſe to Mr. Bentley—I feel ſo frightened—and ſo—alarmed!——

Miſs Sukey. Lord! why ſo you ſhould be, ſiſter; trembling——agitated——and frightened out of your wits at your very ſhadow—like Lady Louiſa, my dear, "all nerve," whilſt I——am all life—vivacity and expectation!—with ſpirit enough to jump into the charming fellow's arms out of a two pair of ſtairs window, if I cannot make my way to—the ſtreet door.——

Enter Nanny.

——Oh! well, Nanny—what news? are not we near the hour?—

Nanny.

Nanny. Not yet, miſs—if you will ſtep and ſecure your jewels, I have packed up every thing elſe. By that time Frank will have taken theſe things away and gone to bed, and then you may return here to meet the two gentlemen.

Miſs Eliza. Oh! Nanny, I never ſhall be able to go.

Nanny. Ha, ha, ha—Lord bleſs you, miſs!—ay, ay, you'll change your tone when the handſome Mr. Bentley appears.

Miſs Sukey. Ay, ſo ſhe will, Nanny—for my part, I'm ready to jump out of my ſkin for———

Enter Frank, who, ſeeing the ladies not gone, ſeems to retire.

——Oh! come in, Frank—we are going—(looking at her ſiſter and Nanny archly)—we—are—go—ing—put the things by and get you to bed.

[Exeunt Miſs Sukey, Miſs Eliza, and Nanny.

Frank draws up one window curtain, then comes to the table.

Frank. Let's ſee—let's ſee — ay, this is the very ſtory (taking up a book)—ay, here it is—where was all that fine love between Lady Harriet and Lord Harry? Adod, I don't wonder now the ladies ſets reading all night and day, and ſends me flying backwards and forwards like a ſhuttlecock to the circulating book-ſhop. Um—um—um—um—(as reading)—oh, d—n me, I ſee the thing now—ay, now for it (ſets down, wets his thumb, and turns over the leaves)— here it is— ay, ay, here it is—— but as it ſeems mighty melting and moving, to keep up my ſpirits I think I had better take a glaſs of wine firſt (pours out wine); ſo, my lovely, beauteous lady Harriet, and my lords and my ladies, and the whole ſet of you, here's my ſervice to ye (drinks his wine)—Well, now for it (ſnuffs the candles, and prepares to read).

Enter Nanny.

Nanny. Lord! Frank, what are you at? Why I thought you had moved the things, and had been gone to bed.

Frank. Ay, but I ha'n't, you ſee—here—here, come, ſit down—take a glaſs of wine, and—here, I'll read you ſuch a fine love ſtory (rubbing his hands) will make your ears tingle again, my girl—here, between a Lady Harriet and a Lord———

Nanny. Between a fiddle-ſtick's end—I have ſomething elſe to do—come, off with you, pray, ſir.

Frank. What, are you going down ſtairs to let your ſweetheart in at the ſtreet door, hey?

Nanny. "Sweethearts" indeed—the fellow's head runs upon nothing elſe lately, methinks, ſince you've been reading ſcraps of your ladies novels, forſooth, inſtead of minding your buſineſs—To be ſure, if they know'd it, they'd like to have 'em read and tumbled about by a dirty footman (toſſing up her noſe).

Frank (imitating her). "By a dirty footman!"—Look at it! (holding up a dirty circulating-library book) a delicate thing for a lady's hand inſide and out! Here it's all over ink—there it's all over greaſe—a—and d—mn me (ſneezing) it's now ſo full of Madam Tabitha's ſnuff, that I muſt waſte a whole bottle of my young maſter's lavender water over it before a dirty footman can bring it near enough to his noſe to be of any uſe to his eyes!

Nanny. Why you a'n't going to read it by that great mole candle of your maſter's, ſure!

Frank. Umph—Marry come up, Mrs. Twopenny Save-all, do you pay for 'em?—What buſineſs, then, is it of yours?—I ſuppoſe you want it yourſelf:—if ſo, take the other, there, and then, you know, they'll be burnt even. [Exit Frank.

Nanny, ſolus.

———Hang the fellow!—and yet his room's over the ſtable, at the end of the garden; ſo I think he can never

never hear us—no, no, we're ſafe enough I warrant; and if he ſhould ſet the ſtables on fire with his large candle, a novel reading, why we ſhall never be miſt in the buſtle, that's all—But I muſt go and peep, and ſee if our gentlemen are in waiting yet.—(Goes behind the window curtain as to look out at window.)

Enter Miſs Eliza and Miſs Sukey.

Miſs Eliza and Miſs Sukey. Nanny! Nanny!

Nanny (coming from behind the curtain). Yes, ma'am, yes—here they are, I verily believe, juſt coming down the ſtreet.

(Miſs Sukey goes behind the curtain to look out at window.)

Miſs Eliza. But ſee—why Frank hasn't removed the cloth!—Where is he?

Nanny. Oh, never mind him, ma'am; he's ſafe enough—got one of the books to read, and I was glad to get rid of him.

Miſs Eliza. But if he ſhould hear us?

Nanny. Oh, no!—his room's over the ſtable, you know; ſo no danger of that, ma'am.

Miſs Sukey (coming from the window). There they are, ſiſter! both your ſpark and mine!—Go down, Nance, and let 'em in very ſoftly.—I have whiſpered them we are ready—and, harkye, be ſure to tell captain Berry not to let his ſword go tack-nack againſt the wainſcot as he comes up ſtairs.

Nanny. Yes, ma'am; I will. [Exit Nanny.

Miſs Eliza (ſitting down in a chair). Oh! ſiſter—I declare I feel ſo—I—I—

Miſs Sukey. Lord, what for?—why, here's no difficulties, nor nothing: now, for my part——

Miſs Eliza. I wiſh we had truſted my mother and aunt—for, to be ſure, as they pity others in ſuch ſituations as ours, they would——

Miſs Sukey. No, no—many people can enjoy miſchief, if it don't happen to fall to their own lot—that makes a wonderful difference! Beſides, ſiſter, you never read of mothers and aunts being truſted in theſe affairs—never;

never;—tho', as to this elopement of ours, it appears to me that it will turn out a mighty dull, quiet piece of buſineſs—for we ſha'n't be miſs'd till near eleven or twelve to-morrow, and we ſhall by then have got ſo far on our journey, that, with my father's plain ſenſe and calculations of diſtances and chances, ten to one if he follows us at all!

Miſs Eliza. So much the better, ſiſter, ſurely!—it will ſave us a thouſand fears and difficulties.

Miſs Sukey. Ha, ha! Lord, how different we are!—A runaway ſhould be all hurry and buſtle—no ſooner gone than miſs'd—horſes, ſervants, chaiſes, and daſh away after us helter ſkelter—drive into an inn-yard—before the duſt is laid from our driving out—change horſes—after us again—we flying with the wind—ſeeing them behind at a diſtance—the captain, half out at window, ſwearing at the poſtboys—Drive on, my lads, laſh away, laſh away—diſtance the old dons, and you ſhall have five guineas a piece, you raſcals!——Oh! that's the thing!—(jumping and clapping her hands together.)

Enter Mr. Bentley and Captain Berry.

Mr. Bentley. I am happy to ſee you in ſuch ſpirits, miſs!—but, Eliza, my dear creature, what's the matter? you ſeem quite diſpirited.

Miſs Sukey. Ay, poor thing!—comfort and ſupport her!—there ſhe's dying with frights and fears, and nothing to raiſe them—I've a great mind, I declare, to give a bit of a ſqueall before we go, juſt to raiſe their curioſities—for without a purſuit or a buſtle, hang me if I would give a pin to run away!

Captain Berry. Charming, ſpirited creature!—but you may as well let that ſame ſqualling alone.

Miſs Eliza. Ay, to be ſure; ſhe frights me moſt terribly!

Bentley. My ſweet, amiable Eliza, fear nothing—we will protect you againſt all dangers and all attacks—depend upon my love and on my honour!

Enter

Enter Nanny.

Nanny. Oh Lord, ladies!—Oh Lord, gentlemen!

Bentley. Why—why what the devil are you come for? with your ſpread fingers, and your Oh lords! and Oh ladies!

Nanny. Why, Lord, ſir! there's Miſs Tabitha creeping down ſtairs as ſoftly as poſſible, with a candle in her hand.

Captain Berry. Confuſion!—what's to be done?

Bentley. Curſed unlucky!—Here, here—ſupport your ſpirits, my loved Eliza, or we are all ruined!—here, do you two ladies hide behind that window curtain, and we'll let down the other.

Nanny. Oh, no, but you can't, ſir—for one of the pullies makes a great ſqueaking!

Captain Berry. What the devil muſt we do then?

Nanny. Oh dear!—what ſhall I do with you?—Oh la, if you would but try, gentlemen, the table-cloth would hide you purely!

Bentley. Ay, ay, my dear, under the table or up the chimney!—Come, Berry, under with you, man—under with you, and I'll follow—(they both get under the table)—but what will you do with yourſelf, child? you'd better come here too.

Nanny. Oh, hide yourſelves—I'll take care of myſelf in a minute.—(Nanny blows out the candle, takes a chair, ſits down in it, leans her head upon her arm on the back of the chair, and falls a ſnoring)

Enter Miſs Tabitha, ſoftly, with a candle in her hand.

Miſs Tabitha. I know I left the fifth volume in this room; and I abſolutely cannot ſleep till I know the fate of Lady Harriet——Hey-day! what's here!—Nanny faſt aſleep!—and the cloth not removed neither!—The wench has certainly made free with the wine here, and fell aſleep!—however, I'll look for the book, and then wake her—

her—Let's ſee—I left it on the table——(advances to the table, Nanny ſnores)—No—it an't here—I ſuppoſe it's fell down (ſets her candle on the ground, lifts up the table-cloth, and, ſeeing the gentlemen, ſqualls).

(The gentlemen come from under the table, and ſurround her, with Nanny.)

Nanny. Huſh! dear ma'am—you'll ſpoil all, ma'am—you'll ſpoil the whole plot!

Tabitha. "Plot," huſſy, what plot! let thieves into the houſe, and——

Nanny. "Thieves!"—La, ma'am, do theſe two fine gentlefolks look like thieves, think you?

Bentley. Dear madam, compoſe yourſelf. Had we known it was you, we ſhould not have hid ourſelves.—No thieves, dear madam, but an humble lover and his friend (kneeling).

Tabitha. "Lover!"—Bleſs me! what means this! ſo novel and extraordinary!

Bentley. Yes, madam—but—but didn't you expect us?

Tabitha. "Expect you!" how could I?

Bentley. What, didn't you receive my letter, dear madam!—Why, Nanny, how's this! how came you not to give your lady my letter?—Yes, madam—I wrote you a moſt tender letter—Six weeks have I done nothing but watch this houſe—and watched your going in, and coming out—but diffidence, madam——

Capt. B. Yes, madam, he's extremely diffident—the moſt impudent dog living (aſide).

Tabitha (aſide). He is prodigious handſome!——Really, ſir, I am thunderſtruck!—I never ſaw you before, to my knowledge!—and——— (ſtaring at him).

Nanny. Indeed, ma'am, I beg pardon in not being able to give you the letter; but, ma'am, you was ſo engaged, and kept me at ſuch a diſtance——

Tabitha. I always keep ſervants ſo (drawing herſelf up).

Nanny (curt'ſying). Yes, ma'am—ſo I was fluſterated, and hadn't courage to give you the letter, ma'am.

Bentley. You ſee, you hear, madam—that would have explained my paſſion, my love, and the dear object of it (bowing).

Tabitha.

Tabitha (aſide). Vaſtly handſome man, indeed!

Bentley. The uncommon circumſtances attending it—and my reaſons for coming here at this time of night—but, madam—your unfortunately not expecting us—has, I fear, ruined the whole buſineſs!

Capt. Berry (aſide). Egad, I wiſh I had thought of this myſelf! for, if any thing more interrupts our chance with the girls, Aunt Tab's no bad *corps de reſerve.*—(Addreſſing her) Yes, madam, my poor friend's ſituation, without your kind wiſhes, I fear, is truly deſperate!

Tabitha. Indeed, gentlemen, (for it is impoſſible not to believe you ſuch,) I am ſo amazed at this adventure, I know not what to ſay—To be ſure ſuch things have happened—and I ſhould be ſorry to treat either of you improperly or harſhly—But yet I cannot comprehend why you——

Capt. Berry. Undoubtedly, madam;—had you received my friend's letter, there was a full explanation of the whole affair.

Miſs Tab. Sir!

Bentley. Yet—yet your unfortunate ſcream, madam, ſhould it have alarmed the family!—and, though to yourſelf—yet any explanation to others on the ſubject—

Tabitha. Might be highly improper.—Well, then, I will delay all further curioſity till to-morrow, when, perhaps, I ſhall hear from you.

Capt. Berry (aſide). So! what will he do now!

Bentley (having ſtood ſilent as much embarraſſed, at laſt, fetching a deep ſigh). To-morrow! Oh, madam!—might—no—it is too much to expect—and I muſt leave you for ever!—Such is the neceſſity of the caſe—If I cannot have an opportunity this night to explain particulars, I can never ſee you more!

Tabitha. Indeed! You raiſe my aſtoniſhment ſtill more, ſir!

Bentley. It may—it muſt ſeem romantic to you, madam—and perhaps highly improbable—but ſo it is.

Capt. Berry. My friend leaves England to-morrow morning, madam, early, to attend upon his father, Sir George, now lying dangerouſly ill at Paris.

Miſs Tab. His father, ſir George! (aſide.)

Bentley. Yet—if you would conſent to what I hardly dare mention———

Miſs Tab. Sir!

Bentley. I have a ſiſter lives in the next ſtreet—there is a carriage at the door—if you would ſuffer me to conduct you to it, I could then, without fear of interruption, explain——

Tabitha. I cannot poſſibly, dear ſir, be guilty of ſuch an impropriety—or—to be ſure——

Nanny. Dear ma'am! there can be no harm nor no danger; for myſelf and this gentleman will attend you with Mr. Bentley.

Tabitha. What, do you know this gentleman, then, Nanny?

Nanny. Oh, dear ma'am, ſure---and Captain Berry here too.

Bentley. Do, dear madam, let me prevail. You muſt be convinced you are perfectly ſafe---and the exigencies of my ſituation——

Capt. Berry. Yes, Bentley, I am ſure the lady will ſee the propriety of the ſtep. Let me aſſure you, madam—

Tabitha. Well, Nanny, lend me your arm---if you'll promiſe now not to leave me, Nanny---why then I think there can be no impropriety in going only to next ſtreet, and to your ſiſter's too, ſir!

Bentley. None---none, my dear, charming, angelic, condeſcending! (kiſſes her).—Oh, madam! you rivet my heart eternally! (Bentley hands her out, ſhe leaning alſo upon Nanny.)

Capt. Berry (aſide). Here we go! "Love at firſt ſight, or delicate ſenſibility!" [Exit Berry after them, bowing ſignificantly to the window-curtain as he goes out---Miſs Sukey peeping juſt as he goes off.]

Miſs Eliza and Miſs Sukey ſtealing forward from behind the window-curtain.

Miſs Sukey. Lord! Lord! that Aunt Tab could be ſuch a fool!---ha! ha!---I wonder what they'll do with her!

Miſs

Miſs Eliza. To be ſure ſhe certainly thinks Bentley's in love with her!

Miſs Sukey. Certainly; but, if they don't come back to us now---Hark!---here they come---here they come!

Re-enter Berry and Bentley.

Miſs Sukey. Well, well, what have you done with Aunt Tab!

Bentley. Ha, ha, ha! Why we had nothing elſe for it; ſo we clapped her into one of the poſt-chaiſes with Thomas, and gave him orders to drive like the devil with her through the turnpike, and wait in the road beyond for our arrival in the other.

Miſs Sukey. Charming! ha, ha, ha!---and what her folly richly deſerves!

Bentley. But come, my dear girls, for fear of any more interruptions, owing to her curſed ſqualling, let's leave a clear coaſt.

Enter Nanny.

Nanny. Oh, ſir! that's impoſſible now; for my maſter and miſtreſs, I find, are coming down ſtairs yonder with ſome of the ſervants, and the reſt are coming up—the whole houſe is in an uproar—ſo there's no way of eſcaping now, but by jumping out at the window.

Enter Mr. and Mrs. Sturdy and the ſervants---Mr. Sturdy in his night-gown, night-cap, and ſlippers.

Mrs. Sturdy. Mercy on us! my galls, and two gentlemun!---What's all this!—and, Nanny, where is my dear ſiſtur Tabitha? (They all ſtand confuſed.)

Nanny. Why, ma'am---I---I am very ſorry to ſay it, ma'am---but Miſs Tabitha is gone off.

Mrs. Sturdy. Gone off!

Nanny. And with a footman, ma'am!---and theſe gentlemen, ma'am, were going by, and my young ladies and I, ma'am, begged their aſſiſtance---and ſo, ma'am, the gentlemen very kindly walked in, becauſe my poor

dear young ladies were ſo frightened.---Yes---and---and ſo, ma'am——

Mr. Sturdy. "And ſo, ma'am"---pleaſe to hold your peace; for I believe not one word of all this fine ſtory! It is too evident to me the deſign of theſe gentlemen was to run away with my two girls.---What hand Miſs Tab has had in it I know not!

Bently (bowing). Sir---let me intreat your patience, and---and---I will---

Miſs Eliza and *Miſs Sukey.* Oh! dear ſir, forgive us (kneeling).

Mr. Sturdy. Riſe, children---I don't blame you---your mother and your aunt are moſt in fault.---It is evident, gentlemen, your addreſſes could not have reached this criſis without your having attached the inclinations of my daughters; and, if you can prove yourſelves of reſpectable connexions---in ſuch a ſituation I may not, perhaps, withhold my conſent.

Capt. Berry. As to that, ſir, I cannot anſwer for my friend here---but for me, if I can't have the *eclat* of running away with a lady---I deſpiſe being led to church mechanically, with conſents, ſettlements, parchments, and pin-monies, old gentleman; ſo your ſervant, ſir.---Come along, Jack! [Exit Berry. Miſs Sukey lifts up her hands and her eyes in aſtoniſhment.]

Mr. Sturdy. Well, ſir! (to Bentley.) Why don't you follow your friend's example?

Bentley. Becauſe I am aſhamed of it, ſir---totally unworthy of your kindneſs. Yet, ſir, your liberality demands this humiliating confeſſion.

Miſs Eliza. What, ſir! Are not you the ſon of Sir George ———? (faultering.)

Bentley. I confeſs I am not, madam; but the ſon of an honeſt, reſpectable man of buſineſs, embarraſſed by my extravagancies: yet, let the wiſh to relieve his ſituation plead as an extenuation for my conduct;---and, give me leave to aſſure you, madam, that the man who wiſhes to perſuade you to act ſo as to plunge a dagger in a worthy parent's boſom, will moſt probably plant only thorns in your own.

Eliza.

Eliza. I feel, too ſenſibly, ſir, the force of your reproach.

Bentley. It is a ſelf-reproach, madam; and yet my affection for you, culpable as I am, was genuine and ſincere.

Sturdy. Dine with me to-morrow, and if you can prove the truth of your aſſertions, and ſincerely wiſh to reform, the means ſhall not be wanting—I'll place you in my counting houſe before night—and as for my girl———

Mrs. Sturdy. Very pretty truly!---you need for to talk of me and ſiſtur Tabitha!—take him into your counting houſe truly!—yes, he'll count for you with a wengeance, I dare be bound for't!

Bentley. Madam, I confeſs I but too much deſerve your ill opinion; yet, is there that wretch who could daſh the cup of mercy from his lips when offered by the hand of benevolence?

Enter Frank.

Mrs. Sturdy. Well, Frank, have you heard any tidings of my ſiſtur?

Frank. Yes, ma'am:---I went after the two poſt-chaiſes, in one of which was Miſs Tabitha and this gentleman's companion.

Bentley. What! captain Berry?

Frank. Yes, ſir---I went up, and inſiſted on ſpeaking to Mrs. Tabitha; who ſaid ſhe was very much obliged to you, madam, but bid me return, and tell you it was very well---then laughed---and the captain ordered the poſtboys to drive on.

Bentley. Indeed, ſir, I am very ſorry———

Sturdy. Indeed I am not.

Miſs Sukey. I am ſure I am heartily glad I have eſcaped him---a noble captain, truly, bent upon running away!

Eliza. Dear me, I am ſo ſurpriſed!

Miſs Sukey. Now I am not ſurpriſed at all---Aunt Tab has done it to revenge herſelf upon Bentley, and captain

tain Berry to revenge himſelf, I fancy, upon poor---dear---Aunt Tab!

Bentley. Indeed I fear he has.

Sturdy. Well, girls, to-night you have had an eſcape indeed, and I hope it will ever be ſerviceable to you through the reſt of your lives, to conſider of, and not to furniſh materials for a novel, ſo dangerous as the events of our Half an Hour after Supper.

FINIS.